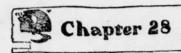
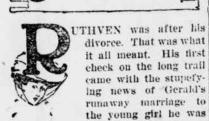
By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS,

Author of "The Fighting Chance." Etc.

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check on the long trail came with the stupefy ing news of Gerald's runaway marriage to the young girl he was

laying his own plans to marry some day in the future, and at first the news staggered him, leaving him apparently no immediate incentive for securing his freedom.

But Ruthven instantly began to realize that what he had lost he might not have lost had he been free to shoulder aside the young fellow who had forestalled him. The chance had passed-that particular chance. But he'd never again allow himself to be eaught in a position where such a chance could pass him by because he was not legally free to at least make the effort to seize it.

Fear in his soul had kept him from blazoning his wife's infirmity to the world as cause for an action against her, but he remembered Neergard's impudent cruise with her on the Niobrara, and he had temporarily settled on that as a means to extort revenue, not intending such an action should ever come to trial. And then he learned that Neergard had gone to pieces. That was the second check

Ruthven needed money. He needed it because he meant to put the ocean between himself and Selwyn before commencing any suit, whatever ground he might choose for entering such a suit. He required capital on which to live abroad during the proceedings if that could be legally arranged. And meanwhile, preliminary to any plan of campaign, he desired to know where his wife was and what might be her actual physical and mental condition

But Ruthven was totally unprepared for the report brought him by a private agency to the effect that Mrs. Ruthven was apparently in perfect health, living in the country, maintaining a villa and staff of servants; that she might be seen driving a perfectly appointed Cossack sleigh any day with a groom on the rumble and a companion beside her; that she secined to be perfectly sane, healthy in body and mind, comfortable, happy and enjoying life under the protection of a certain Captain Selwyn, who paid all her bills and at certain times was seen entering or leaving her house at

the worst. Ruthven had posted off to swayed forward, falling loosely and Drina come this once! It can't burt bis attorneys. To them he nalvely flat. And this time she did not try to confessed his desire to be rid of Alixe He reported her misconduct with Neergard-which he knew was a lie-her pretense of mental prostration, her disappearance and his last interview with Selwyn in the card room He also gave a vivid description of that gentleman's disgusting behavior and his threats of violence during that in-

To all of which his attorneys listened very attentively, bade him have no fear of his life, requested him to make several affidavits and leave the rest to them for the present.

Which he did, without hearing from

them until Mr. Hallam telegraphed him to come to Edgewater if he had nothing better to do.

Mr. Hallam was a very busy, very sanguine, very impetuous young man. and when he met Ruthven at the Edgewater station he told him promptly that be had the best case on earth: that he, Hallam, was going to New York on the next train, now almost due, and that Ruthven had better drive over and see for himself how gayly his wife maintained her household, for the Cossack sleigh, with its gray crimson tchug, had but just returned from the usual afternoon spin. and the young chatelaine of Willow Villa was now on the snow covered lawn, romping with the coachman's

to the villa about, tall cedars, a bit of bushy fore- mitted of no delay on the score of pri-There were clumps of evergreens land and a stretch of snow. And across this open space of snow a young girl was moving, followed by a white wolfhound. Once she paused, hesitated, looked cautiously around her. Ruthven, hiding behind a bush, saw her thrust her arm into a low evergreen shrub and draw out a shining object that glittered like glass Then she started toward the house again.

At first Ruthven thought she was his wife. Then he was not sure, and he cast his cigar away and followed, slinking forward among the evergreens. But the youthful, fur clad figure kept straight on to the veranda southern drill ground and began to of the house, and Ruthven, curious move northward. A destroyer took and determined to find out whether it Selwyn across to the great fortress inwas Alixe or not, left the semi-shelter side the Virginia capes and left him of the evergreens and crossed the open there. During his stay there was alspace just as the woman's figure dis most constant firing. Later he continappeared around an angle of the ve ned northward as far as Washington, randa.

Vexed, determined not to return graphed Austin: without some definite discovery, Ruthven stepped upon the veranda. Just around the angle of the porch he heard a door opening, and be hurried forward, impatient and absolutely un-dismantled for the summer, telephonafraid, anxious to get one good look at ed Nina at Silverside that he had been

his wife and be off. But when he turned the angle of the grace the festivities which were to porch there was no one there. Only an consist of a neighborhood dinner to open door confronted him, with a big, the younger set in honor of Mrs. Germild eyed wolfhound standing in the ald. But he said nothing about Sel-

doorway looking steadily up at him. Ruthven glanced somewhat dublous- her brother's arrival in New York had ly at the dog; then as the animal made anything to do with Austin's detention no offensive movement he craned his As Selwyn came leisurely up the

the same young girl, still in her furs, walked into the room, big hand exemerging from an inner room, her tended large bantering voice undis-

arms full of dolls.

In his eagerness to see more Ruthven pushed past the great white dog, who withdrew his head disdainfully from the unceremonious contact, but quietly followed Ruthven into the house, standing beside him, watching him out of great, limpld, deerlike eyes.

But Ruthven no longer heeded the dog. His amused and slightly sneering gaze was fastened on the girl in to be a living room to the right and now, down on her knees beside a! couch, smiling and talking confidentially and quite happily to herself, was placing her dolls against the wall.

Then the great white dog growled ery low, and the girl in the fur jacket looked around and up quickly.

Alixe! He realized it as she caught his pale eyes fixed on her, and she stared, sprang to her feet, still staring. Then into her eyes leaped terror, the living horror of recognition distorting her face. And as she saw he meant to speak she recoiled, shrinking away, turning in her fright like a hunted thing. The strange doll in her hand glittered. It was a revolver wrapped in a red rag.

matter?" he stam-



mered, stepping forward, fearful of the weapon she clutched

But at the sound of his voice she screamed. crept back closer against the wall, screamed again, pushing the shining muz zle of the weapon deep into ber fur jacket above ber breast.

"F-for God's sake," he gasped, "don't fire-At the sound of his don't"voice she screamed

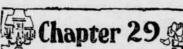
She closed both eyes and pulled the trigger. Something knocked her flat against the wall, but she heard no sound of a report, and | you know? The oldest Craig girl might she pulled the trigger again and felt another blow.

The second blow must have knocked her down, for she found herself rising asked to her knees, reaching for the table to aid her. But her hand was all red and slippery. She looked at it stupidiy, fell forward, rose again, with the acrid smell of smoke choking her and her pretty fur jacket all soaked with the warm, wet stuff which now stamed both hands.

It was her way. It had always been her way out of trouble-the quickest, easiest escape from what she did not rhoose to endure. As for the man, they finally con-

trived to drag the dog from him and lift him to the couch, where he lay twitching among the dolls for awhile, then stopped twitching.

Later in the night men came with lanterns, who carried him away. A doctor said that there was the usual chance for partial recovery. But it was the last excitement he could ever venture to indulge in.





INE days is the period of time allotted the human mind in which to wonder at anything. In New York the limit is

much less. No tragedy can hold the boards as long as that where the bill must be renewed three times a day to hold even the passing attention of those who themselves are eternas understudies in the continuous metropolitad performance.

As for Selwyn, a few people noticed his presence at the funeral But even huge white wolfhound. Ruthven drove that episode was forgotten before he left the city six hours later under an invitation from Washington which advate business or of personal perplexity, for the summons was peremptory and his obedience so immediate that a telegram to Austin comprised and concluded the entire ceremony of his leave | he stepped forward, and his firm hand

taking Later he wrote a great many letters to Eileen Erroll, not one of which he ever sent. But the formality of his silence was no mystery to her, and her response was silence as profound as the stillness in her soul. But deep into her young heart something new had been born.

In April the armored ships left the but it was not until June that he tele-

Government satisfied. Appropriation certain next session. Am on my way to

Austin, in his house, which was now detained and might not be able to

fleshy neck striving to see inside the front steps Austin, awaiting him feverishly, hastened to smooth the florid He did see-nothing very much, only jocose much over his features and

turbed by the tremor of a welcome which filled his heart and came near

filling his eyes: "So you've stuck the poor old government at last, have you? Took 'em all in-forts, fleet and the marine cav-

"Sure thing," said Selwyn, laughing in the crushing grasp of the big fist. "How are you, Austin? Everybody's in the country, I suppose," glancing furs who had entered what appeared around at the linen shrouded furniture "How is Nina? And the kids? Good business? And Eileen?"

"She's all right," said Austin "Gad! She's really a superb specimen this summer. Where's your luggage? Oh, is it all here? Enough, I mean, for us to catch a train for Silverside this

afternoon? "Has Nina any room for me?" asked

Selwyn "Room! Certainly! I didn't tell her you were coming, because if you hadn't the kids would have been hor ribly disappointed. She and Eileen are giving a shindy for Gudys-that's Gerald's new acquisition, you know So if you don't mind butting into a baby show we'll run down. It's only the younger bunch from Hitherwood House and Brookminster. What do you say, Phil?

Selwyn said that he would go, hesitating before consenting. A curious feeling of age and grayness had suddenly come over him, a bint of fatigue. of consciousness that much of life lay behind him. So Austin went to the telephone and

called up his house at Silverside, saying that he'd be down that evening Nina got the message just as she had arranged her tables, but woman is

born to sorrow and beiress to all the unlooked for idiocies of man "Dear," she said to Eileen, the tears of uxorial vexation drying unshed in her pretty eyes, "Austin has thought fit to seize upon this moment to bring a man down to dinner So If you ardressed would you kindly see that the tables are rearranged and then telephone somebody to fill in-two girls, do for one. Beg her mother to let he:

"Whom is Austin bringing?" Eileen

"He didn't say. Can't you think of a second girl to get? Isn't it vexlag? Of course there's nobody left-nobody ever fills in in the country Do you know, I'll be driven into letting Drina sit on with us- for sheer lack of material. I suppose the tittle imp will have a fit if I suggest it and probably Then she got to her knees once more, perish of indigestion fomorrow Elleon laughed "Oh Ning do let

And so it happened that, among the jolly throng which clustered around the little candle lighted tables in the dining room at Silverside. Dring to ecstasy, curly hair just above the nape of her slim white neck and cheeks like pink fire, sat between Boots and a vacant chair reserved for her tardy father.

dared. Then Boots had been summoned persuaded to take the chair at a Burns to take in Drina and the youthful celebration in Scotland. He was ex Craig girl, and, as there were to have tremely silent and stole away at the been six at a table, at that particular earliest opportunity. Next week ap table sat Boots decorously facing Ei. peared in the National Observer a huleen, with the two children on either

hand and two empty chairs flanking

At dinner Drina and the younger Craig maiden also appeared to be bent upon self destruction, and Boots' eyes opened wider and wider in sheer amazement at the capacity of woman in embryo for rations sufficient to

maintain a small garrison. "There'll be a couple of reports," he said to himself, with a shudder, "like build up the kidneys so that they Selwyn's chaosite, and then there'll be will work properly, as a serious kidno more Drina and Daisy. Hello!" ney trouble may develop. Sold by He broke off, astonished "Well, upon druggist of Monterey and Swadley Post. my word of words! Phil Selwyn, or Bros., Vanderpool. I'm a broker!"

"Phil!" exclaimed Nina. "Oh, Austin, and you never told us!" "Train was late, as usual," observed Austin "Philip and I don't mean to butt into this very grand function-Hello, Gerald! Hello, Gladys! Where's

our obscure corner below the salt, Nina? Oh, over there!" Selwyn had already caught sight of the table destined for him. A deeper color crept across his bronzed face as closed over the slim hand offered.

For a moment neither spoke. She could not. He dared not. Then Drina caught his hands, and

Eileen's loosened in his clasp and fell

away as the child said distinctly: "I'll kiss you after dinner. It can't be done bere, can it, Eileen?" Selwyn, beside Eileen, had ventured on the formalities, his voice unsteady

and not yet his own. Her loveliness had been a memory. self, but the superb fresh beauty of the girl dazed him. There was a strange new radiancy, a living bright-Exquisitely unreal her voice, too, and the slightly bent head, crowned with make prices. the splender of her hair, and the slowly raised eyes, two deep blue unracles tinged with the hues of paradise.

ed Eileen as Selwyn took her to the Long Distance Phone No. 4 "On the lawn out there-farther out,

doorway after dinner. "Because if you are not I'll wait for you."

in the starlight," he whispered, his Directory of Highland County HENRY A SLAVEN

She bent her head, passing slowly before him, turned, looked back, her answer in her eyes, her lips, in every limb, every line and contour of her, as Austin and Boots were talking volu-

bly when he returned to the tables now lerk-J. Clif Matheny. Supervisors - A. C. Judy, W.H. Vance, Lee Chew. They meet first Monday veiled in a fine haze of aromatic smoke. Gerald stuck close to him, happy, exof the month cited, shy by turns. Others came up on every side-young, frank, confident fel-

lows, nice in bearing, of good speech

And outside waited their pretty part ners of the younger set, gossiping in Superintendent of Schools-J I, Jones. Commissioner of Revenue-J A Whitehall, on stairs and veranda in garru-

lous bevies, all filmy silks and laces and bright eyed expectancy. Population, 1900: white, 5,269; colored, The long windows were open to the Number of voters-white; 1,196; col-

veranda. Selwyn, with his arm through Gerald's, walked to the railing and ored, 52. looked out across the fragrant stariit waste. And very far away they heard the sea intoning the hymn of the four For Sale-Valuable Property In

Then the elder man withdrew his arm and stood apart for awhile. A little later he descended to the lawn. Monterey containing one acre on which crossed it and walked straight out into are situated a dwelling, and all necessary

volce broke, "my darling"-

and manner.

she stood a mement looking back.

arrong the trees, etfin lights broke out



He leatted to listen

across the unseen Briar Water, then vanished He balted to listen. He looked long and steadily into the darkness around him. Suddenly he saw her-a pale blur to the dusk

"Eileeh?" "Is it you, Philip?" She stood waiting as he came up through the purple gloom of the moor land, the stars' brilliancy silvering her -waiting-yielding to pallid silence to his arms, crushed in them, looking into

bis eyes, dumb, wordless. Then slowly the pale sacrament changed as the wild rose tint crept into her face. Her arms clung to his shoulders, higher, tightened around his neck. And from her lips she gave into his keeping soul and body, guiltless as God gave it, to have and to hold beyoud such incidents as death and the THE VA, FIRE & MARINE, eternity that no man clings to save in the arms of such as she.

THE END.

Snowball Showers. More than one explorer in cold climates has noted the curious phenome non of a "snowball shower." The balls it is true, are not very big, the average being about the size of a hen's egg, but they are true snowballs for all that-compressed globes of snow. not little lumps of ice or hall. A fall Unimproved Washington of the kind occurred in north London in March, 1859, and at the time it was observed that the balls seemed five times as dense and compressed as ordinary snow and in no way to be told from the usual handmade missiles They had fallen during the night and in part and give part cash for good were strewn many layers thick over a very large area. No cause-except a cribed for the strange phenomenon, and mountaineers are apt to discredit the stories of snowball showers told them by the old guides till suddenly in the midst of an ordinary storm they find themselves assailed as though by myriads of mischievous schoolboys .-London Standard.

Barrie's Critic. J. M. Barrie some years ago wat

morous article entitled "Mr. Barrie In the Chair," in which Mr. Barrie's lack of social tact was held up to ridicule. Many people thought the writer has gone too far and protested. But tl. author of the article was Mr. Barrie

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The following is a brief synopsis of the centy of Highland, which may be to our readers from time to time. Circuit (curt reets the fourth Tues lay in April, July 10th, and Nov. 10th. Judge-Geo K Anderson, Clifton Forge

Commonwealth Attorney-Edwin B:

Treasurer—J. A. Jones. Surveyor—H. A. Slaven. Superintendent of Poor—L. B. Way

Area-Acres, 280,572; sq. miles, 438

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Va. or by the undersigned. R. R. RUFF, Lexingto , l'a

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